

To this great task Righi devoted natural abilities singularly adapted to the needs of his science in the period of his greatest productive activity, when our views as to the nature of electricity and of matter were undergoing a fundamental reorganization.

Righi was a serious and well-trained thinker brought up in the old school and one who was too experienced to be led astray by brilliant generalizations which lacked sound experimental confirmatory evidence, and yet withal he possessed in some measure those gifts which we are most likely to associate with the poet or with women than we are with a man in an exact science—the gifts of imagination and intuition. That these two qualities were necessary in the building up of the electron theory nobody will deny. They are possessed by the living Thomson, Rutherford and a few of their co-workers and they were possessed by the dead Righi, and his name will stand with theirs in the history of his science.

AUGUSTUS TROWBRIDGE

SCIENTIFIC EVENTS

THE CENTENARY OF SIR JOSEPH BANKS

THE commemoration of the centenary of Sir Joseph Banks, Bart., who died on June 19, 1820, has been celebrated by the Linnean Society. According to the report in *Nature*, Dr. B. Daydon Jackson read the first communication on "Banks as a Traveller," speaking of his four overseas voyages—first, the visit to Newfoundland in H.M.S. *Niger*, on board which his friend Constantine Phipps, afterwards Lord Mulgrave, was a lieutenant; next, the adventurous voyage of the *Endeavour*, Lieutenant Cook commander, when Banks so amply proved his value in many untoward events; third, the voyage to Iceland; and fourth, his trip to Rotterdam in 1773, when he was still eager for an expedition to the north. The second paper, by Dr. A. B. Rendle, was entitled "Banks as a Patron of Science." Banks's life from his return to England in 1771 until its close in 1820 was that of an enthusiastic, liberal, and generally far-sighted patron of science. A friendship

began with King George, which steadily increased, and Banks was consulted on important matters of very various kinds. He became botanical adviser to the King in relation to the Royal Gardens at Kew, which developed under Banks's guidance, becoming the repository of plants of economic and ornamental value from all parts of the world. Banks initiated or encouraged voyages of exploration, and kept up an extensive correspondence with men interested in science overseas. His house in Soho Square was the rendezvous of students and men of all classes interested in schemes of philanthropy or science; his magnificent library and herbarium were at the service of other workers, and after his death were bequeathed to the British Museum. For forty-two years he was president of the Royal Society. He was very closely, though indirectly, associated with the origin of the Linnean Society. Mr. James Britten, in the third paper, began by remarking that much of his paper was based upon the daily use of Banksian specimens for nearly half a century in the British Museum. The author showed that the popular belief that Banks left all his botanic work to his secretaries and curators, Solander and Dryander, was a mistaken one, and that Banks displayed great botanic acquirements. The president remarked that official records of the British Museum testified to the active interest taken by Banks in all matters connected with its advancement, and that keepers and trustees alike referred to him for his advice and decision. Certain objects closely connected with Banks were exhibited.

THE EPIDEMIC OF INFLUENZA IN ENGLAND

A FURTHER report on the great influenza epidemic has been issued by the Registrar-General. According to the abstract in the *London Times* the report states that the deaths allocated to influenza during 1918 numbered 112,329, the males being 53,883 and the females 58,446. The males included 7,591 non-civilians, and, deducting these, the deaths of civilians corresponded to a mortality of 3,129 per 1,000,000 civilian population.